NATIVE AMERICANS AND ARCHAEOLOGISTS

STEPPING STONES TO COMMON GROUND

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Mondo New Orleans: An Alternative Perspective

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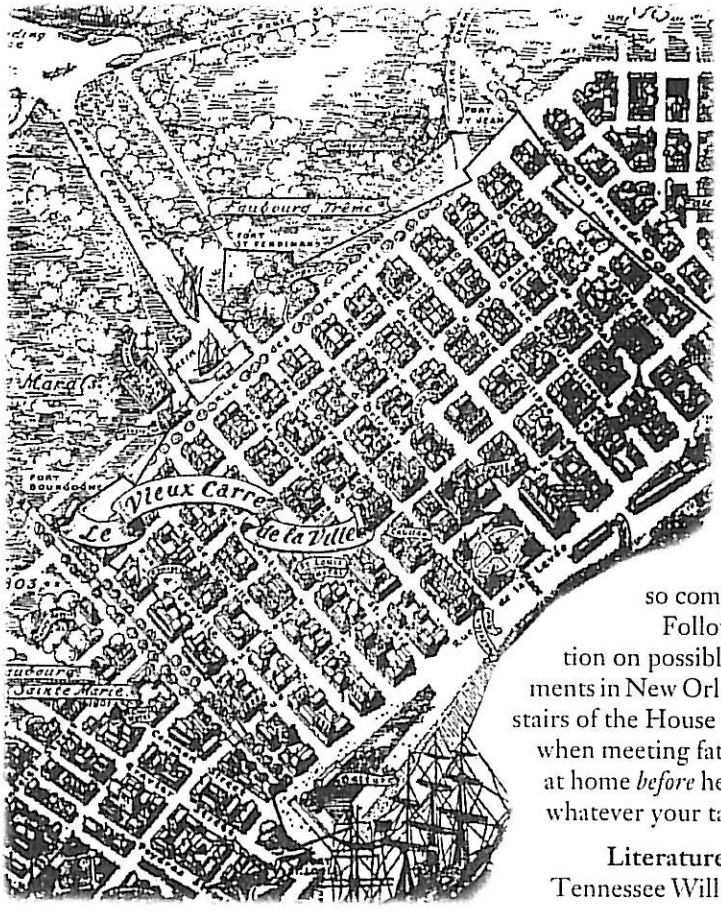
You've read the preliminary program, maybe you've taken a look at tour information and guide books, or perhaps you've asked your friends and colleagues just what's the story with New Orleans. You've probably been told plenty of interesting things about the town known variously as the Big Easy or the City that Care Forgot. Get the picture? Each of you that has previously attended a New Orleans annual meeting has at least one unforgettable memory. One of mine is not particularly impressive, but it recurs every February or so while anticipating the April meeting in the Big Easy:I was strolling along Bourbon Street one night, not too late, when odd movement caught the corner of my eye. Adjusting my blurred vision to the change in light (of course it was the light—what else could it have been?), I looked through a doorway up a steep flight of stairs, which I swear was as steep as the stairs of Temple 1 at Tikal, and watched a man crawling up the stairs on his hands and knees. One step up, two steps back, sliding on his belly. He was persistent, but pathetic. I watched for what seemed like hours, but he never reached the "House of the Rising Sun" while I was there. What it was, or why it was so compelling for him, I'll never know.



Following is an idiosyncratic sampling of information on possible alternative, as well as mainstream, entertainments in New Orleans. While I don't recommend crawling up the stairs of the House of the Rising Sun, you might try some of them when meeting fatigue sets in. Much of this research can be done at home *before* heading for New Orleans. You'll be prepared for whatever your tastes dictate.

Literature: By all means read *A Streetcar Named Desire*, by Tennessee Williams, or watch the video with Marlon Brando as

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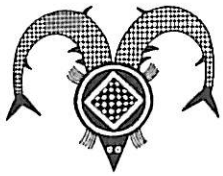
Working Together —



Native American Oral Traditions and Archaeology

Roger Anyon, T. J. Ferguson, Loretta Jackson, and Lillie Lane

Editor's Note: This article represents one of three position papers that are a product of a workshop, entitled Native Americans and Archaeology, sponsored by the Arizona Archaeological Council, and held on November 9–10, 1994 in Flagstaff, Ariz. The workshop was funded by the National Center for Preservation Technology and Training, a division of the National Park Service. The workshop participants were professional archaeologists from federal, state, and local agencies, academia, and the private contracting community, and Native American representatives from the Hopi, Zuni, and Hualapai tribes, and the Navajo Nation. The purpose of the workshop was to bring together a diverse group of archaeologists and Native Americans to share in a dialogue concerning three specific issues: (1) consultation between Native Americans and federal agencies, (2) oral tradition and archaeology, and (3) Native Americans' role in archaeology. For more information regarding this workshop and the other two position papers, please contact me at (520) 734-6636, or write c/o Cultural Preservation Office, The Hopi Tribe, P.O. Box 123, Kykotsmovi, AZ 86039. Kurt Dongoske.

The purpose of this position paper is to present ideas to the Arizona Archaeological Council membership on the appropriate use of oral traditions in archaeological research. It provides a basis for continuing a dialogue between Native Americans and archaeologists about how and why archaeology is conducted in Arizona.

Historical Perspective on the Use of Oral Traditions in Archaeology

The first archaeologists to work in the Southwest had a keen interest in the relationship between Native American oral traditions and the archaeological record. Archaeologists such as Victor Mindeleff, Frank Hamilton Cushing, Cosmos Mindeleff, and Jesse Walter Fewkes (1900, Tusayan Migration Traditions. In *Nineteenth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology for the Years 1897-1898*, Part. 2, pp. 573–634. Government Printing Office: Washington, D.C.) routinely collected information about Native American oral traditions and used it in their research to help interpret the chronology, function, and cultural affiliation of the archaeological sites they investigated. During this period, Fewkes (1900:579) astutely observed that "This work...can best be done under guidance of the Indians by an ethno-archaeologist, who can bring as a preparation for his work an intimate knowledge of the present life of the Hopi villagers."

In the early 20th century, however, many cultural anthropologists began to discount the historical value of Native American oral traditions. Writing about the Zuni, for instance, A. L. Kroeber (1917, *Zuñi Kin and Clan*. Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History, 18(2):39–204) noted, "The habitual attitude of the Zuñi, then, is unhistorical...That now and then he may preserve fragments of a knowledge of the past that approximate what we consider history, is not to be doubted. But it is equally certain that such recollection is casual and contrary to the usual temper of his mind." Similarly, Robert H. Lowie said, "I cannot attach to oral traditions any historical value under any conditions whatsoever" (quoted in F. Eggan, 1967, From History to Myth: A Hopi Example. In *Studies in Southwestern Ethnolinguistics*, edited by D. Hymes, pp. 33–53. Mouton: The Hague). Archaeologists were influenced by the attitudes of cultural anthropologists, and for many decades, oral traditions were generally ignored in archaeological research.

Recently, there has been a renewal of interest in the historicity of Native American oral traditions (e.g., A. Wiget, 1982, Truth and the Hopi: An Historiographic Study of Documented Oral Tradition Concerning the Coming of the Spanish. *Ethnohistory* 29:181–199; L. S. Teague, 1993, Prehistory and the Traditions of the O'Odham and Hopi. *Kiva* 58:435–454; D. M. Bahr, J, Smith, W. S. Allison, and J. Hayden, 1994, *The Short, Swift Time of Gods on Earth: The Hohokam Chronicles*. University of California Press: Berkeley). Indicative of this work is Teague's analysis of the oral traditions of the O'Odham and Hopi, oriented toward increasing our understanding of the cultural events and processes of the period before documentary history in southern Arizona. Teague (1993:436) concluded that, "oral histories can be shown to conform to...archaeological evidence to an extent not easily attributed to the construction of an after-the-fact explanation for the presence of numerous ruins throughout the region. These histories reflect direct knowledge of events in prehistoric Arizona." Her article represents the renewed respect archaeologists are beginning to afford native accounts of traditional history.

The Nature of Knowledge in Oral Traditions and Archaeology

As archaeologists begin once again to incorporate Native American oral traditions into archaeological research, it is important to recognize that oral traditions and archaeology represent two separate, but overlapping, ways of knowing the past. Because they are qualitatively distinct, different standards apply in the way that information is collected, evaluated, and used to understand the past. These sources of knowledge converge in a broad sense on certain issues and themes, however, such as migrations, warfare, residential mobility, land use, and ethnic coresidence. Both sources can therefore be used productively to investigate these issues, among others.

There is no doubt that a real history is embedded in Native American oral traditions, and that this is the same history that archaeologists study. Oral traditions contain cultural information about the past carefully preserved and handed down from generation to generation within a tribe. The archaeological record contains material remains of past human behavior that provide physical evidence for many of the same events and processes referred to in oral traditions. Since oral traditions and archaeology have inherent limitations, combining them in re-

search can create knowledge that goes beyond what is possible using either source by itself.

Tessie Naranjo (1995, Thoughts on Migration by Santa Clara Pueblo. *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 14:247–250) recently pointed out that Native American oral traditions are often axiomatic rather than hypothetical. Whereas scientists search for exclusive and universal truth, Native Americans use their oral traditions to attain a multiversal understanding of the past that simultaneously operates on many different levels of meaning.

In this regard, it needs to be understood that oral traditions and archaeology are both palimpsests of history. Oral traditions incorporate the cultural knowledge of many ancestors at multiple levels of signification. Similarly, archaeological sites incorporate a complex record of past human behavior embedded in artifacts and archaeological deposits. Both oral traditions and archaeology thus constitute sources of knowledge that have intricate structures that must be systematically and carefully analyzed in terms of their own internal logic in order to use them in scholarly research.

Methodologies for Using Oral Traditions in Scholarly Research

Studies by David Pendergast and Clement Meighan [1959, Folk Traditions as Historical Fact: A Paiute Example. *Journal of American Folklore* 72(284):128–133], Eggan (1967), and Wiget (1982) have unequivocally demonstrated that a real history is embedded in Native American oral traditions. As Eggan (1967) pointed out, anthropologists now have more data and better historical controls than earlier generations of anthropologists, and consequently, we should be able to analyze social and cultural data in a more sophisticated manner so as to develop the means to segregate history from other aspects of oral traditions. Jan Vansina (1985, *Oral Tradition as History*. University of Wisconsin Press: Madison) presents a rigorous methodology for incorporating oral traditions in historical research. These methodologies need to be incorporated into archaeological method and theory to establish the scholarly basis for using oral traditions in historical research.

Good scientific research uses a methodology based on the falsification of hypotheses. In essence, archaeologists disprove what they can, and then create theories to explain the residual hypotheses. This scientific methodology may not always be appropriate for the research of oral traditions, where a more humanistic and qualitative approach is sometimes warranted. Applying a humanistic rather than a scientific methodology in the use of oral traditions should be done in a manner that meets high scholarly standards.

Uses of Oral Tradition and Archaeological Research

Archaeologists are interested in learning about the past. Native Americans are interested in maintaining the cultural traditions they inherited from their ancestors who lived in the past. For Native American tribes with strong oral traditions, the primary sense of history comes from the narratives, stories, and accounts told by tribal elders. In this context, archaeology constitutes a secondary source of supplemental information about tribal heritage. Some, but not all, tribal members may find this supplemental information useful in the transmission of family values.

Archaeology can also be used by tribes to achieve their own political and legal goals in relation to the larger society. Archaeological data can be used to help document land claims and water rights, and manage tribal cultural resources on lands managed by state and federal agencies. A small but increasing number of Native Americans are realizing that archaeology can be used constructively to validate tribal history.

In recent years, archaeologists have been called upon to expand their professional activities with respect to historic preservation by collecting information about traditional cultural properties and sacred places, as well as historic archaeological sites of interest to particular tribes. Native American oral traditions contain essential information about cultural values and beliefs pertaining to traditional cultural places, natural features, specific sites, and landscapes that are important cultural resources for Native Americans (e.g., K. B. Kelley, and H. Francis, 1994, *Navajo Sacred Places*. Indiana University Press: Bloomington). In order to successfully meet the mandate for historic preservation, contemporary archaeologists must either work with oral traditions or coordinate their work with other researchers who are working with this source of information. This creates an ethical and methodological imperative for archaeologists to work closely with Native Americans so that the information needed to properly manage tribal cultural resources can be collected and reported in an appropriate manner.

The Need for Respect in the Research of Oral Traditions

Indiscriminate references to oral traditions as "myths and legends" is demeaning to Native Americans. It perpetuates a false dichotomy that implies that oral traditions are less valid than scientifically based knowledge. Oral traditions and scientific knowledge both have validity in their own cultural context. Scientific knowledge does not constitute a privileged view of the past that in and of itself makes it better than oral traditions. It is simply another way of knowing the past.

Archaeologists need to have respect for sources of knowledge about the past that are unique to Native Americans. Even in situations where oral traditions are not used in archaeological research, archaeologists should be sensitive to both the inherent limitations of scientific knowledge and to the ways that oral traditions can transcend scientific knowledge with respect to cultural heritage.

Sometimes archaeologists publish findings that contradict Native American oral traditions. This need not be done in a belligerent manner that directly challenges these traditions, and archaeologists should strive to place their conclusions in a cultural and intellectual context to help Native Americans understand the nature of scientific knowledge and other archaeologists understand the nature of oral traditions. By respecting the values of Native American oral traditions, archaeologists will lay a foundation for Native Americans to respect the values of scientific knowledge, and for scientists to respect the values of oral traditions.

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Sensitive Issues in the Use of Oral Traditions

Oral traditions are intimately connected with Native American religious beliefs and knowledge, much of which is esoteric in nature. For this reason, it is essential for archaeologists to collaborate with tribal cultural advisors regarding the use of oral traditions in archaeological research. These advisors are needed to determine what aspects of oral traditions are appropriate for use in scholarly research, to help interpret the results of research, and to guide decisions about publication.

Reducing oral traditions to a written form has a cultural impact that needs to be considered in research. As Whiteley (1988:xvi) has observed, written texts turn oral traditions into fixed literary images widely disseminated in the larger American society in a manner that Native Americans cannot control. This is a critical concern when sacred knowledge is misappropriated for scholarly research, and a dynamic oral tradition is reduced to a static point of reference.

The preferences of each tribe regarding the use of oral traditions in archaeological research should be respected. Some tribes—such as the Hopi—encourage the use of oral traditions in archaeological research, especially when this research is done by researchers working in collaboration with Hopi cultural advisors (K. Dongoske, T. J. Ferguson, and L. Jenkins, 1993, Understanding the Past through Hopi Oral *History*. *Native Peoples Magazine* 6(2):24–31). These advisors are the best judges of what aspects of oral traditions constitute historical information and what aspects constitute esoteric religious knowledge that should remain confidential.

The Navajo people have an abundance of oral traditions that coincide with and complement contemporary archaeological research. The store of Navajo traditional knowledge can enhance archaeology and the Navajo Nation by furthering our understanding of the past. Many Navajo people are fascinated by the oral traditions that ground historical stories in the context of places that can still be seen in contemporary landscapes. An important part of the physical counterpart of stories are the ruins studied by archaeologists. The Navajo Nation therefore recommends that archaeologists augment their scientific conclusions with Navajo oral traditions. To facilitate this approach, the Navajo Nation Historic Preservation Department is developing ways for the Navajo people to interact with the science of archaeology.

The Hualapai Tribe places a great value on the oral traditions of its elders, and these traditions are an important part of the cultural heritage of the Hualapai people. When Hualapai culture is the subject of research, it is the Hualapai people who are the cultural experts. Consequently, the Hualapai Tribe prefers that research using oral traditions be conducted by tribal members so that sensitive information can be controlled and the tribe can be sure it is used for appropriate purposes.

Some tribes, like the Pueblo of Zuni, are reticent about the use of oral traditions in scholarly research. At present, the Pueblo of Zuni does not encourage the use of oral traditions in scholarly research, except in a very limited fashion by researchers employed directly by the tribe. This makes it imperative for scholars researching Zuni oral traditions to consult with the tribe.

Some Native Americans think that in the past archaeologists have "mined" archaeological sites to collect the artifacts that form the basis of archaeological research. There is an increasing concern that archaeologists now want to "mine" oral traditions to interpret the archaeological record. There is a growing anxiety that unless tribal members fully collaborate in the research process, this approach will result in the continuation of cultural exploitation.

Recommendations for Use of Oral Traditions

- By asking tribal officials, determine whether or not a tribe wants its oral traditions used in archaeological research.
- If tribes want oral traditions to be used in archaeological research, then establish at the outset the parameters of that use with Native American cultural advisors and tribal officials.
- Compensate subject specialists such as tribal cultural advisors for their time (like other professional researchers) on funded cultural resources projects.
- If tribes do not want oral traditions used in archaeological research, then state this in reports. These reports should acknowledge that the review of culture history and the scientific findings do not include oral traditions at the request of the tribe.
- Encourage tribal review of archaeological research, especially if it uses oral traditions.

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